



Cornell University

John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines

Document Title: Three Introductions  
Author: Miranda Hallett  
  
Course: Anthropology 148  
Course Title: Common Places: Cultural Sites of Memory and Meaning  
  
Year of Award: Spring 2005

Copyright Statement:

This material is copyrighted by the author and made available through the Cornell University eCommons Digital Repository under a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-Commercial License.

This document is part of the John S. Knight Writing in the Disciplines First-year Writing Seminar Program collection in Cornell's eCommons Digital Repository.

<http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/10813>.

winner

## Spring 2005 Knight Award for Writing Exercises

The Knight Award for Writing Exercises recognizes excellence in short exercises designed to improve student writing by focusing on sentences. Appropriate topics may be drawn from the whole range of writing issues—for instance, use of primary sources, (e.g. integrating quotations into sentences); effects of audience on style; effective uses of the active and passive voice; control over sentence patterns such as coordination, subordination, and parallelism; choice of diction; effective punctuation; and mechanics (e.g. manuscript formats). Exercises may be developed for use in and/or out of class.

Submissions should comprise three parts:

- A copy of the handouts or instructions that go to students.
- An explanation of the exercise and the principles behind it addressed to future instructors who may use the exercise.
- If possible, an example of a response to the exercise. (Be sure to get the student's written permission to use it.)

Submissions may range in length from one to four or five pages.

Winning Writing Exercises will usually be included in the course packet for Writing 700 and will be posted on the Knight Institute website.

The two winning entries will receive \$350 each; honorable mentions, if any, will receive \$150.

Submissions are due in 101 McGraw Hall by Friday, May 13. No exceptions can be made.

## Spring 2005 Knight Award for Writing Exercises

~Please Print Clearly~

Instructor's name Miranda Cady Hallett 265 McGraw Hall

Department ANTHR Course # and title 148 common places: sites of memory and meaning

Should I win a prize, I give the John S. Knight Institute permission to publish, quote from, and/or distribute copies of the writing exercises, and to distribute publicity to newspapers and other publications, local and/or national, about my winning the prize. I am also prepared to send electronic versions of my text to the Knight Institute (knight\_institute@cornell.edu). I will receive the award for my prize winning essay upon submission of the electronic text.

"Three Introductions"

Title of Writing Exercises

Instructor's signature Miranda Cady Hallett Date May 13, 2005

THREE INTRODUCTIONS exercise.

For today's writing exercise, I am asking you to write three hypothetical introductions to an essay. They should all include the following points. Though you are welcome to change the order of the bulleted points below, you should try to make each introduction coherent and logical. However, each should be distinct in writing style—details below!

- Aboriginal people are native to Australia
- Europeans colonized Australia
- Colonization was violent for Aboriginals
- Jimmy Inkerman (JI) was an aboriginal
- A European man killed JI
- Aboriginals built a memorial to JI
- JI memorial has Aboriginal aspects
- JI memorial has European aspects
- Aboriginal culture affected by European culture (syncretism)
- Syncretism does not weaken Aboriginal culture
- JI memorial is strategic
- JI memorial strengthens Aboriginal culture

INTRO 1

Use as many short, simple declarative sentences as you possibly can. Do not use multiple clauses within one sentence. Use simple and straightforward words.

## **INTRO 2**

Combine the points under multiple clauses into as few sentences as possible. Use complex, descriptive, highly theoretical terminology.

## **INTRO 3**

Write this one in what you consider an ideal style. Vary the length of your sentences and use vocabulary that is clear, yet descriptive.

6. Miranda Cady Hallett

May 2005

Knight Award for Writing Exercises submission

**"Three Introductions" writing exercise: *rationale and suggestions for implementation***

Most writing guides advise us to use sentences of diverse length in order to maintain the reader's interest. I designed this exercise as a tool to help students understand and internalize the reasons to vary sentence length and style. The activity also provides a participatory way to review sentence patterns and structural choices more generally.

Rather than using the handout as I have written it, you will probably find it more useful to create your own that fits in with your course's topic. For my list of points to include in the introductions, I used material from our class. In fact, I based my list on an actual introduction that one of my students wrote in an essay the previous week. I was impressed with the way he had condensed a great deal of pertinent information, framing his thesis in elegant and descriptive prose.

***Instructor plan for "Three Introductions" exercise:***

1. Hand out the student instructions and go over them with the class. Give them a time limit for completion of the three introductions. In my class, 15 minutes seemed to be adequate. Give them a hint that you'll be looking for the people who can write the *most* sentences for response #1 and the *fewest* sentences for response #2. The competitive element provides motivation!
  
2. Ask students to count the number of sentences in each of their introductory paragraphs and write that number alongside. Either in the full class or in groups of 3-5, those students who had the most sentences for intro 1 and the least for intro 2 should read theirs aloud. Discuss:  
What is the effect of short declarative sentences?  
What is the effect of long, multiple-clause sentences?  
What are the benefits and drawbacks of each?  
What information seemed better suited to brevity?

Which points seemed more logical when combined with others?

3. Next, have everyone (in plenary or in the small groups) read his/her third "ideal" introduction aloud. Listen carefully. Writers should explain what they tried to do and why they made the choices they did.

This is a good time to discuss different ways of connecting clauses and points (coordination, subordination, and parallelism). If you do this activity in the larger class, you can go over it on the board, while with small group work it's useful to have a handout on the topic as well as moving from group to group to encourage them to discuss their work in these terms.

Here are some examples I used from this particular topic:

*Coordination:*

The Jimmy Inkerman Memorial is a distinctively Aboriginal site, yet it also includes elements that are decidedly European in origin.

*Subordination:*

Although the Aboriginal way of life has clearly been affected by European colonization, this syncretism does not imply a weakening of native Australian culture.

*Parallelism:*

The Jimmy Inkerman memorial is a strategic intervention and has come to signify the persistence of Aboriginal culture.

The colonization of Australia brought the Aboriginal people not only the physical threat of violence, but also the potential for alienation from their cultural traditions.

4. Have the groups (or the class as a whole) create a "Best of the Best" introduction by combining elements of some or all of their individual pieces. Taking into consideration their discussions on varying sentence length and diversifying sentence structure, they should try to produce a paragraph that everyone agrees is solid. If you have been working in smaller groups, be sure to reconvene into the full class and read these "Best of the Best" introductions aloud. Facilitate a brief discussion on the activity, recapitulating the key points.